


2021

# Student handbook




OPTIMA TRAINING AND CONSULTING LTD | ARAS MUMHAN (MUNSTER GAA COUNCIL BUILDING),  
DUBLIN ROAD, LIMERICK

	Author: Á Broderick	HB 02 Student Handbook Rev 04
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## 1. Optima Training and Consulting Ltd Code of Practice

Optima Training and Consulting Ltd is committed to all clients, learners, staff, and peers in the delivery of high-quality courses. We are also committed to monitoring and review of all programmes. We always welcome constructive criticism as these contribute in a meaningful and positive way to the development of our programmes.

To ensure this we conduct self-evaluation as required by QQI and PHECC quality assurance agreement. We ensure that all our quality assurance procedures always adhered to. Optima Training and Consulting Ltd commits to improving our programmes, maintaining an appeals procedure which is flexible and fair. We will ensure that assessments are undertaken in a way which is fair, verified, and valid for certification and that we will ensure that there are open channels of communication between our organisation and our learners. Ensure a high standard of quality for the learning environment Plan for the different ways that people learn Ensure the competency of our staff in the delivery of all programmes (includes administrative personnel) Ensure programs are relevant and up to date.

### 1.1 Guidelines to learners' rights and conduct


The purpose of these guidelines is to describe the rights and responsibilities of all parties. The intention is to assist in meeting the expectations of Learners in an environment of mutual trust and respect.

#### 1.1.1 What we will do:

- Treat you with respect,
- Offer courses of high quality in a welcoming and conducive atmosphere,
- Provide all necessary course information to allow you to make an informed choice,
- Operate fair and consistent entry to programmes,
- Ensure fair and consistent assessment procedures,
- Give you the opportunity to receive feedback and give feedback to us,
- Treat, in confidence, any issues or complaints which may arise and offer reasonable accommodation to any individual who may require it,

#### 1.1.2 What you can do

- Treat other Learners and Optima Training and Consulting Ltd. personnel with respect
- Take an active and positive part in the process,
- Take on board the time commitment required to complete the programme,
- Complete any assignments by agreed deadlines,
- Follow instructions of Optima Training and Consulting Ltd. personnel in matters of health and safety,
- Inform Optima Training and Consulting Ltd. of any relevant change in your circumstance or change of address (for posting out certificates),
- Inform your trainer of any additional support you may require.


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## 2.0 Rules and regulations for Learners

### 2.1 General

The below regulations are not a comprehensive but show the level of behaviour that is expected at all times. These regulations are set up so that all courses run efficiently with the interest of everyone present's safety & rights. Breach of any of these regulations will be communicated to the person in question. Each trainer has the responsibility and the authority to enforce these rules.

- You must sign in on the attendance sheet every day.
- Please fill out all paperwork you are given as fully as possible.
- All mobile phones should be powered for the duration of the class.
- You should not leave for the duration of the course, except for at official break times with permission from the trainer.
- Please observe fire safety regulations at all times.
- You should treat all equipment with respect.

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### 3.0 Health and Safety


To ensure your safety when attending a course with Optima Training & Consulting Ltd, we ask you to ensure the following:

- Ensure that you are not under the influence of an intoxicant
- Smoking is not permitted inside.
- Do not engage in dangerous behaviour.
- Use items provided correctly in the interest of safety, health and watch your step as you go about.
- Take care when using stairs.
- Pick up anything that is lying about dangerously; keep all walkways clear of tripping hazards.
- All entrances/exits should be free of obstruction.
- Please keep your workplace tidy.
- If anything is in an unsafe place, remove it or report it to your trainer.
- Report all accidents regardless of how small they are to your trainer immediately.
- If you are ill or require medical attention, report to your trainer.
- Report to your trainer defects in your workspace.
- Do not interfere with any electrical appliances.
- All Learners should familiarise themselves these (Your trainer will point the fire doors, escape routes and assembly points out).
- In the event of a fire, please exit the building through the nearest exit and proceed to the assembly point. Keep fire doors and other entrances and exits clear of obstruction.
- Please tell your trainer if you need leave the class at any time. It is important that we maintain an accurate head count at all times in case of an evacuation.
- Hygiene is required at all times.
- Use common sense.

#### 3.1 Misconduct:

Misconduct during a course is taken very seriously by Optima Training & Consulting Ltd. All reports of misconduct will be investigated. The following are examples of offences (this list is not exhaustive):

- Conduct which may disrupt teaching, work practice or study,
- Sexual harassment or bullying of any learner or member of staff,
- Abuse of alcohol or other substances or abuse, possession, or supply of any illegal drug on the training course,
- Obstruction or harassment of any member of staff or learner in the performance of duties, work, or other activity,
- Damaging, defacing, or misappropriating any property of Optima Training and Consulting
- Any theft of property or any other dishonest or illegal acts which may adversely affect the centre, staff member or fellow learner Interfering with safety equipment,
- Smoking in non-designated area,
- Any overly noisy or unruly behaviour, or the use of foul or abusive language,
- Activity which (is likely to) harmfully affect the reputation of the centre, the Learners, or members of staff,
- Actions which are racially or sexually offensive or which is offensive to those with learning and/or physical disabilities,

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- Breaching assessment regulations Incitement or encouragement of any other person or persons to do any of the aforementioned.

## 4.0 Student feedback:

During the training, you will be asked to complete a student/learner feedback form. This form is to help Optima Training & Consulting Ltd identify its strength and weaknesses on our course so that Optima can adhere to its commitment of continual improvement. The student feedback form can be submitted anonymously, however training event details are required.

We may contact you for further clarification on your feedback.

## 5.0 Recognised prior learning (RPL):

You may be able to gain recognition for previous certified training or education programmes; this can potentially reduce the number of days that you need to attend a programme based on their previous and current experience and qualifications.

While there is no change to the assessment criteria, you can avail of RPL by completing a RPL application form and submitting it to the Programme Director. The Programme Director shall review your application to see if it meets the requirements of RPL for the programme. The Programme Director will inform you of the outcome

## 6.0 Support

Should you require any additional support to complete your training course, please let Optima Training and Consulting Ltd., know as early as possible so that the additional support can be implemented.

You are required to notify the office and/or programme Faculty member of any special requirements needed to enable us to see how best to accommodate you during or after assessment. You can do this in the following ways:


- On initial booking the programme director will discuss any specific needs and requirements that you may have and if necessary, will complete the request for reasonable accommodation request form when booking the programme,
- During the completion of the registration form on the 1st day there will be an option to request reasonable accommodation and complete the request for reasonable accommodation form

### 6.1 Reasonable accommodation

Optima Training and Consulting Ltd will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that all Learners with disabilities, either temporary or permanent, are afforded every reasonable chance to attend, partake and be assessed fairly in their assessment process.

There are various types of reasonable accommodation accessible to learners, these include:

- Modified presentation of assignments/examination papers e.g., enlargements

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- Spelling/grammar wavier
- Rest periods – resulting in extra time being allocated to qualifying learners
- Altered exam settings – Learners will be accommodated by our reasonable accommodation policy below, all requests will be dealt with case by case
- Extra time

While it is recommended that the standard of English required by learners on all programmes is such that they can both understand and convey the concepts contained in the programme content, learner's whose first language is not English can request the following additional supports

- Modified presentation of assignments/examination papers e.g., enlargements
- Spelling/grammar wavier
- Closed captions on Zoom
- Cart captions on Teams
- Use of subtitles in PowerPoint Presentation (this can be translated into another language)


Optima Training & Consulting Ltd will consider compassionate circumstances issues at all stages of the learning process. We will consider the rescheduling of assessment arrangements and deadlines for submission to facilitate learners who, through no fault of their own, require compassionate consideration.

The following factors are considered as being likely to merit compassionate consideration, subject to confirmation, clarification, and as required in some cases, medical certification:

- A temporary, permanent, or long-term disability or chronic or disabling condition such as epilepsy, glandular fever, or other incapacitating illness of the learner
- A physical injury or emotional trauma during a period four to six weeks previously
- Learning disabilities involving problems with reading, writing, math, reasoning, listening, and speaking
- Recent bereavement of close family member or friend
- Severe accident
- Domestic crisis
- Terminal illness of a close family member
- Other extenuating circumstances outside the control of the learner

Optima Training & Consulting Ltd will consider the specific nature of each compassionate request made and will decide (based on evidence) on fair procedure relating to each case. Optima Training & Consulting Ltd are aware of the requirement for flexibility in terms of compassionate consideration and will balance this need for flexibility with the essential requirement to maintain the integrity and fairness of the assessment process.

Learners should contact their programme Director as soon as they are able to apply for compassionate circumstances.

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## 7.0 Assessment

Assessments are required to be completed as part of the QQI and PHECC accreditation process. Assessments can include assignments, examination, learner record, project, skills demonstration, and collection work. The method(s) chosen will depend on that programme. Reasonable accommodation shall be made available for learners where standard assessment procedures present difficulties. An assessment brief will be given to you. This will include what you are required to do, how the assessment will be marked, and when it is to be submitted. All work must be submitted to your trainer for assessment by the agreed deadlines.

QQI assessments can have a combination of examination, assignments, skills demonstration.

For QQI programmes when the assessment is complete (if required the assignment has been submitted), an internal assessor and external authenticator will verify the results and then they will be forwarded to QQI. Learners will be issued with a provisional result initially until the QQI cert is issued. Optima Training and Consulting Ltd will hold your assessed material for 3 months. Your assessment material will not be returned to you; please retain a copy.

PHECC assessments are completed on the day and random samples are selected to undergo internal validation.

For PHECC programmes courses such as FAR, the assessments are completed during the programme, and they have the following assessment:

- Multiple Choice Questionnaire (MCQ), and
- Skill Demonstration.

### 7.1 Assignment guidelines for Learners

When submitting work (if required for your programme), use the following checklist:

1. Use the checklist in the declaration to ensure complete submission
2. Sign the declaration
3. Submit the declaration with their work
4. Use registered post if posting
5. Make sure you receive a receipt or an email from Optima Training and Consulting Ltd. confirming your submission.
6. Keep a full copy of your work


### 7.2 Post assignment submission process

Your assignment will undergo internal verification and external authentication (checked by an independent person). Once your assignment has being verified and your results approved by our Results Approval Panel, they will then be submitted to QQI for certification. QQI Certificates will be posted back to us. After we document the certificates, we will send them out by post.

### 7.3 Confidentiality and Security

Optima Training and Consulting Ltd. takes confidentiality and security very seriously. All of our records are kept secure, and all electronic records are password protected.



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## 7.4 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the presentation of somebody else's work in whatever forms it comes in: print, electronic, visual, sound, etc. as your own. 'Work' is their words, ideas, arguments, concepts, or designs. Plagiarism ranges from copying, without referencing, whole sections of published text to taking illustrations or formulae from unpublished text with crediting the original author. Other examples include copying other learners work and collusion where two or more learners work on assignments they are meant to do on their own. Plagiarism is a serious offence whether it is intentional or not. Avoidance Learners submitting any form of work must sign a declaration that their work contains, in no way, any form of plagiarism and that the work they are submitting is wholly their own, an accredited source's work or clearly distinguished group work.

Work submitted for assessment may be examined for plagiarism either electronically or by other means. If examiners expect plagiarism, the matter should be reported to the QQI co-ordinator. If there is sufficient evidence, the co-ordinator will conduct a preliminary investigation and interview the student(s) concerned. When/If there is reasonable evidence of plagiarism; the co-ordinator can take any of the following actions:

- Reduction in the mark (including a mark of 0) for the work affected.
- Resubmission of the work with a reduced maximum possible score.
- Referral to the Centre Manager.

## 7.5 Referencing

Referencing is the practice of acknowledging the sources of your information when you are writing it down in your exams, assignments, reports, and other coursework related material. Referencing is important as it makes research in assignments more credible and accountable. Using others research or writing without referencing them is regarded as misleading and dishonest. By referencing correctly, you avoid plagiarism which is claiming another's ideas as your own. References must be made whether you are using someone else's opinions, research, format, theories, data, or methods of organising. You need to reference the source, regardless of what it is e.g., book, journal, magazine, video, recording, website, lecture or any other medium that conveys information.


A reference is required if you:

- Quote (use the same words as someone else)
- Copy (use the same figures, tables, or format as someone else)
- Paraphrase (convert someone else's content into your own)
- Summarise (simplify down someone else's material).

### 7.5.1 How is referencing done?

There are many styles of academic referencing in common use but all of them use these two components:

1. An indication in the main text of what is referencing another work.
2. A list of references that correspond with the indications in the main text.

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### 7.5.1 Harvard-Style referencing

At Optima Training and Consulting Ltd., we use Harvard-style referencing. Your trainer will give you more information about this during your course, but, in general it is a specific type of referencing where the information goes in the following order:

Author Surname followed by initials, year of publication in brackets, Title of the book in Italics, the edition if it's not the first one, publishers name and place of publication.

## 8.0 Equality & diversity

Optima Training and Consulting Ltd is committed to equal opportunities for all, irrespective of age, colour, disability, ethnic or national origin, marital status, nationality, race, religion, belief, sex, sexual orientation, or other considerations not justified in law, which are irrelevant to the performance of the task.

Optima Training and Consulting Ltd is dedicated to taking positive action to promote such equality and diversity in relation to recruitment, promotion, transfer, training, benefits, facilities, and procedures.


Optima Training and Consulting Ltd shall also, through the application of all its policies, seek to appoint, develop, and retain the people & customers required to meet its business objectives. It is Optima Training and Consulting Ltd.'s objective to achieve best practice in all policies and procedures to support its objectives of ensuring equality of opportunity for all existing and potential employees/contractors and customers/Learners.

In addition to employees, this Policy will apply to the Company's treatment of agency staff, contractors, consultants, or any other person working for or on behalf of Optima Training and Consulting Ltd. Optima Training and Consulting Ltd will also expect other persons working for or on behalf of the company to be aware of and comply in full with this Policy.

Discrimination is viewed by Optima Training and Consulting Ltd as serious misconduct and as such will be subject to action under the Disciplinary Procedure. Employment Tribunal proceedings for discrimination can be taken against both employers and employees and in some cases, an individual employee may be found personally liable to compensate the person bringing the claim of unlawful discrimination.

The company is committed to a fully efficient and effective Equal Opportunities Policy and will:

- through appropriate communications, ensure that this Policy is understood and implemented, and that all individual employees fully understand their personal responsibilities,
- ensure that all agency workers, contractors, consultants, and any other persons working for or on behalf of the company are fully aware of and comply with this Policy,
- make appropriate provision for the implementation and periodic review of this Policy,
- review its recruitment, selection, employment practices and opportunities for training and development; and

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- monitor the effectiveness of the Policy, aiming for continuous improvement in all aspects of equal opportunities in employment & business practice.

## 9.0 Complaints

If a complaint cannot be resolved informally or if the complainant feels that an informal complaint will not address the issue, then the complaint should:

- Be submitted using the complaint form within 5 working days of initial contact to the relevant Programme Director

The complainant should provide a detailed account of the issue in the complaints form.

The relevant Programme Director will contact the complainant with 5 working days to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and outline the course of action to be taken.

The Quality Manager will undertake an investigation of the complaint.

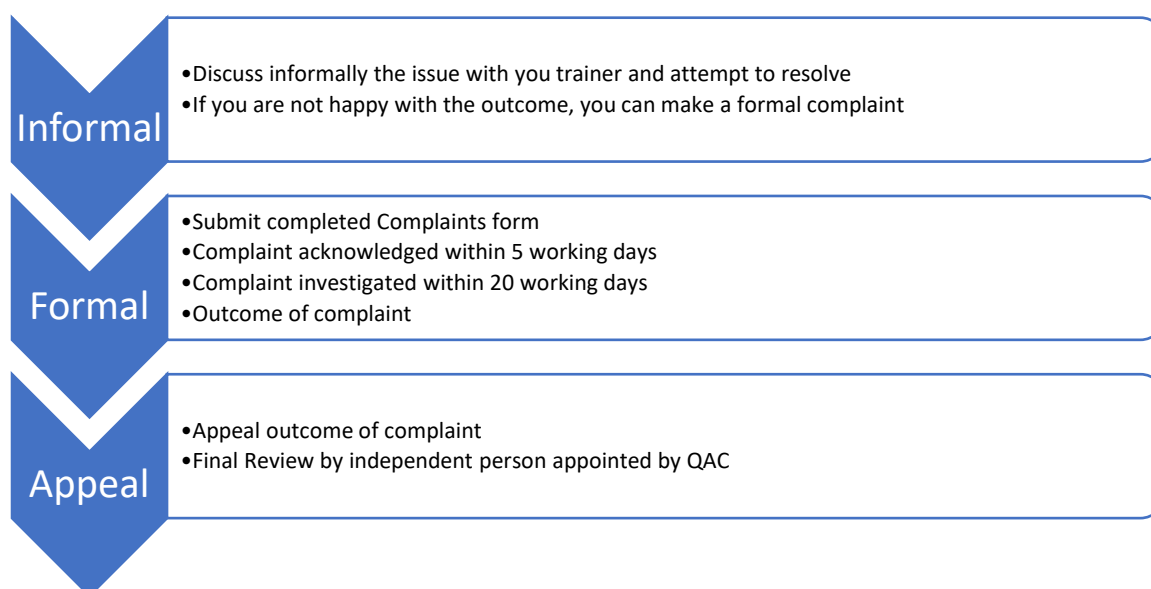
The investigation may take different forms depending on the nature of the complaint. This process should be completed within 20 days of receipt of the complaint. If there is a delay in the process the learner shall be informed.


When the investigation is complete the complainant will be notified of the outcome in writing.

Where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they can make a request for a final review to be carried out.

The request for review must be submitted in writing to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) within 10 working days of the outcome.

The QAC will appoint an independent person to carry out the review. The decision from the review will be final.



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Ombudsman:

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they may complain to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman can examine a complaint about the service provider

The Ombudsman requires a complainant have completed the following before they can examine the complaint:

- Complained to the service provider and allowed it six weeks to respond.
- Received a final response to your complaint. (You may complain to the Ombudsman if there is a long delay in the provider replying to you).
- Used the service provider's appeals process (if they have one).
- If more than 12 months has passed since the action or decision that affected you happened, that there is a good reason for the delay in contacting the Ombudsman.

All complaints are logged in our improvement log and are reviewed by the QAC


## 10.0 Appeals

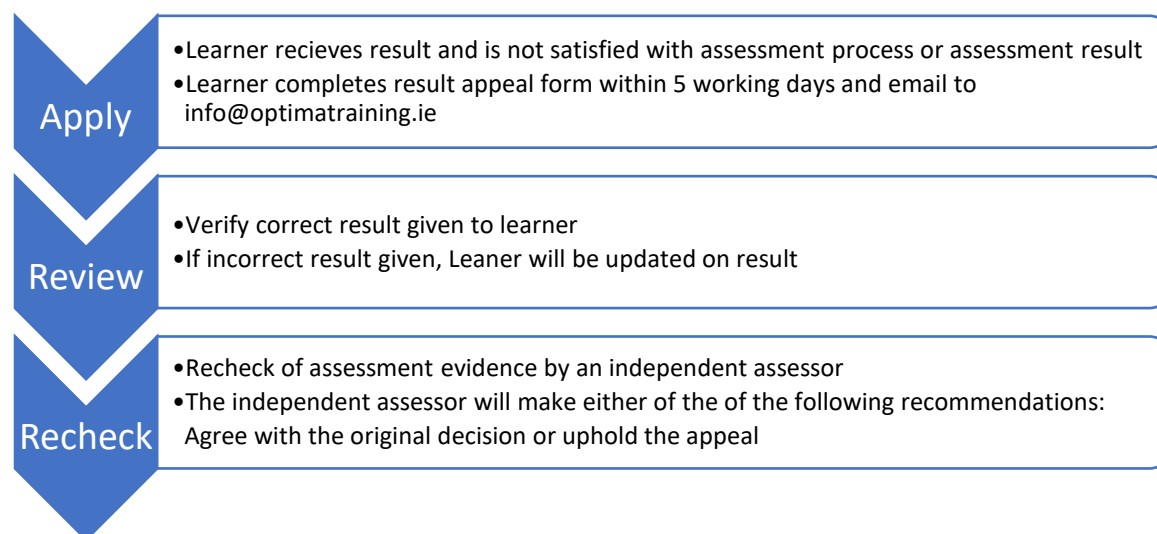
Optima Training & Consulting Ltd has put in place an Appeals Process which enables learners to appeal a result based on the assessment process or the assessment result.

**Assessment Process:** a learner may appeal if they perceive there to be irregularities/inequality in the implementation of Optima Training & Consulting Ltd assessment process.

**Assessment Result:** a learner may appeal a result if s/he believes the grade awarded is not representative of the quality of the work submitted for assessment purposes. The outcome of this type of appeal is either that the learner's grade remains unchanged or is upgraded. The only evidence which may be presented is that which has already been presented by the Learner. New evidence may not be added for the appeal.

Before appealing their result, learners are encouraged to discuss their result with the relevant Faculty member. This will allow the learner to get feedback on their assignment and where they lost marks. If the learner is not happy after engaging with the faculty member, they can appeal their result.

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#### **Apply:**

The results appeal form is available from the any Programme Director. Learners can submit the results appeal form to the relevant Programme Director within 5 working days of receiving their result. The only evidence which may be presented by the learner at appeal is that which has already been presented for assessment. New evidence may not be added by the learner for the appeal.

#### **Review:**

Once a learner has submitted the results appeal form, Optima Training & Consulting Ltd shall review the learner's result and verify that the correct result was given to the learner. If the incorrect result was given to the learner, the correct result shall be given to the learner. The learner will be given the opportunity to review the correct result and they can appeal the result within 10 working days of receiving the correct result.

#### **Recheck:**

The independent assessor who evaluates a learner appeal will not be the faculty member who made the original assessment decision. All assessment evidence and documentation (including any video or your assessment) will be thoroughly reviewed by the independent assessor.

#### **Outcome:**


The learner will be informed of the outcome of the Appeals Process within an agreed timescale.

The independent assessor will make either of the of the following recommendations:

- Agree with the original decision or
- Uphold the appeal

The learner will be informed in writing of the independent assessor's decision.

#### **For QQI programmes:**

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Following the completion of the Optima Training & Consulting Ltd Appeal Process, the results for the learner(s) concerned will be forwarded to QQI as their final result. The final result is the basis on which QQI will issue certificates.

## 11.0 Data Protection

Our data protection policy is in line with GDPR legislation. We don't give information to others about you. We don't ask for information which isn't required to certify you and deliver your certificate. The only third party that receives some of your information is QQI as it is required to certify you.

To meet our responsibilities under the legislation and in accordance with the data protection principles, we will:

- Obtain data and process information fairly.
- Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit, and lawful purposes.
- Use and disclose data only in ways compatible with these purposes.
- Take appropriate measures to keep data safe and secure.
- Keep data accurate, complete, and up to date.
- Ensure data is adequate, relevant, and not excessive.
- Retain data for no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes it was collected for.
- Provide data to data subjects upon request.

We collect and use personal data information to provide the following services:


- The provision of Customer Service, Enquiry Responses, quotations, and any other follow up Information on your request
- Customisation and Tailoring of Course Content for participants
- To manage vendor accounts and for accounting (payment) purposes • To comply with Regulations and Statutory Obligations
- To comply with requirements imposed by Training Accreditation bodies such as QQI, IHF where certification is required
- To provide personnel, payroll, and pension administration services in connection with our employees
- To get and retain Clear and Opt-In Consent for further marketing follow up
- For provision of the enforcement of legal rights for the protection of both our interests
- For provision of billing, payment, remittance, or receipt/payment of money on your behalf

## 12.0 Faculty contact details

Your Faculty contact details will be provided to you during the induction presentation.

## 13.0 Optima Training contact details:

Name of company: Optima Training & Consulting Limited

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Newcastle,  
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Postcode: V94 NW83

Company Registration Number: 573288

Phone number: +353 (0)61 514 744

Email: info@optimatraining.ie

## 14.0 Revision history

Rev	Reason for change	Date	Initiator
01	New	26/04/2021	Á Broderick
02	Updated for alignment with new procedures	11/11/2021	Á Broderick
03	Grammar and spelling review	18/11/2021	Á Broderick
04	Removal of reference to qqi external appeal	29/11/2021	Á Broderick